

Skidegate Band Council Announcement

You may have heard talk about an exciting new development being created to help in learning the Haida Language – well, the rumours are true! The Skidegate Band Council Education Division would like to formally announce that, in partnership with the the Elders of the Skidegate Haida Immersion Program and the provincial First Peoples' Council, we have begun work on an interactive Hlgaagilda Xaayda Kil dictionary (referred to as an App) for iPod, iPod Touch, iPhone and iPad devices. We intend this App to be released in September 2011.

At the beginning, the App will provide translations of about 2000 Haida words and phrases along with their English translations. All entries will be paired with an audio recording of a SHIP Elder demonstrating correct pronunciation and flow, as well as an image that can be customized by the owner of the mobile device. Over the coming months, two of Skidegate's Mentored Skills students will be checking that the written translations for the App are correct. The audio tracks provided by SHIP are currently available for listening to on the www.FirstVoices.com website and we encourage you to visit the site and register if you would like a preview of the words and phrases that will be included with the initial release of the App.

The App software was initially piloted with the SENĆOŦEN language of the WSÁNEĆ people and the Halq'eméylem language of the 'Stó:lō people, with great success. Recent developments in the software have enabled higher resolution for viewing on devices such as the iPad and for presentation on projection screens for classroom use. There will be room for future versions of the App to grow beyond the initial 2000 words and phrases, but to begin with we will attempt to include words that will provide function and description of everyday life activities. The reasoning behind this is so that users of the App can start to incorporate these words and phrases in their own everyday activities. Once completed, the App will be available, free of charge, from the Apple iTunes App store. We will be hosting public information sessions to orient interested community members to the downloading and operation of the App. If you would like to see an example of what the Hlgaagilda Xaayda Kil App will look like, you may download the SENĆOŦEN and Halq'eméylem versions by searching the iTunes App store for “First Voices.”

The Elders of SHIP are doing an extremely important job of documenting and archiving the Haida language, and this App would not be possible without the materials they have created. Incorporating technology will help provide a platform to distribute SHIP's work throughout the community and enable SHIP materials to be at the fingertips of our younger generation. Following documentation and archiving, the next step to revitalizing our language is to find ways to make SHIP materials accessible to a wide range of language learners. In order to effectively do this, we need to know our community's attitudes and motivation towards learning the Haida Language. We are hoping to gather this information over the summer months before the App is released, and compare these attitudes and motivations at some point following the release and distribution of the App. Such information is necessary if we are to continue the development of engaging and successful learning opportunities, and is integral to securing further funding for language initiatives. To determine the language learning attitudes of Skidegate residents we will be surveying the community in the coming months, so please share your ideas, opinions, and motivations with us when we conduct this survey.

This is truly an exciting time for engaging our people with the revitalization the Haida language, and we couldn't have started this project without the blessing of the SHIP Elders and the support of the Skidegate Band Council. For all Hlgaagilda Xaayda Kil learners present and future, the steps being taken now are vital for a broad reuptake of our language. When the App is completed, the Skidegate Band Council Education Division will be hosting a public event to honor the involvement of SHIP and introduce the App to the community.

The Skidegate Band Council